

INVESTIGATING ANXIETY- RELATED PROBLEMS IN ORAL PRESENTATION
AMONG ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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*To my late father and mother, HjKadir @ Shahr Bin Isnin and HjAzmah
Bt Ahmad*

-Al-Fatihah-

*To my my stepmother, HjNoraini Ali,
To my beloved husband, Emirudin Bin Jaafar and kids
- Ahmad Lutfi, AmirahLiyana and AlyaLiyana,
And to all my siblings*

Thank you for all your love and support...

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Finally, I am extremely thankful to all the participants who had provided me with rich and detailed data for the study which add the value to the research findings.

ABSTRACT

Oral presentation is now becoming a crucial assessment especially at tertiary level, however most of the students could not perform well due to the anxiety level that they have. Therefore, this investigation aims to look at anxiety-related problems among engineering students in doing the oral presentations. In discussing this, this research looked at the factors that enhance the anxiety problems and the symptoms shown. Students own perception was taken into account when discussing the findings in addition to perceptions revealed by five engineering lecturers to give a clearer picture of the issue. There were 125 students of engineering from three different faculties in UTHM Johor who participated in the survey. Alongside completing a questionnaire, qualitative approaches using observation and interviews instruments were done over fifteen selected students. In order to see the clear evidence of anxiety occurrences, the two observations which were done manage to record a general description of students performed the oral presentation with the existence of anxiety. The interviews were conducted in order to support their findings. The findings revealed that anxiety does exist among engineering students in UTHM Johor. Several factors were identified and highlighted. Among the factors include the types of presentation done, the language and individual nature problem in addition to lack or last minute preparation. The symptoms under a few categories- bodily reactions, expressive reactions and emotional reactions were discussed and related examples of reactions were then identified. The implications of the study were discussed to give these engineering educators some suggestions of ways to tackle the problem. Future research is hoped to implement the suggestions, thus filling the gap that the previous research and the similar kinds have identified.

ABSTRAK

Pembentangan secara lisan merupakan penilaian yang penting di peringkat pengajian tinggi, namun ramai pelajar yang tidak dapat melaksanakan tugas ini dengan baik disebabkan tahap kebimbangan dan ketakutan yang dihadapi. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk melihat faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan perasaan kebimbangan ini dan mengkaji simptom-simptom yang berkaitan. Persepsi pelajar dan juga pensyarah kejuruteraan telah diambil kira bagi mendapatkan maklumat yang jelas tentang isu ini. Seramai 125 pelajar kejuruteraan daripada tiga fakulti di UTHM Johor telah mengambil bahagian di dalam kajian ini. Di samping kajian kuantitatif melalui soal selidik, kualitatif data telah di perolehi daripada instrument pemerhatian dan temubual dengan 15 pelajar. Untuk mendapatkan bukti yang jelas tentang kewujudan perasaan kebimbangan dan ketakutan ini, dua pemerhatian yang telah dijalankan terhadap pelajar telah mendapat deskripsi keseluruhan tentang masalah ini. Temubual bersama pelajar terlibat mengukuhkan lagi data mengenai keadaan ini. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan masalah ini wujud di kalangan pelajar kejuruteraan di UTHM Johor. Beberapa faktor dapat dikenalpasti. Di antara faktor tersebut termasuk jenis pembentangan, masalah bahasa dan masalah semulajadi pelajar di samping kurangnya persediaan atau persediaan di saat akhir. Simptom-simptom mengikut kategori seperti reaksi badan, reaksi muka dan reaksi emosi telah dikenalpasti dan dibincangkan. Implikasi kajian ini dibincangkan bagi memberi pandangan kepada pensyarah –pensyarah kejuruteraan terlibat bagi mengatasi masalah ini. Kajian masa hadapan diharapkan dapat menggunakan cadangan tersebut bagi mengisi kekurangan kajian seumpamanya yang telah dijalankan sebelum ini.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. **ESL** English of Second Language
2. **PRCA** Personal Report on communication apprehension
3. **CA** Comprehension Apprehension
4. **TC** Technical Communication

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

English is now becoming more important in Malaysia as the society has started to see the importance of it in order to keep up with the outside world. One of the skills required is oral presentation skills. Most ESL learners, regardless of courses taken found this as the most challenging task, however this skill is in fact one of the important requirements not only in educational field but also at the workplace. For ESL learners who are in tertiary education, oral presentation is one of the crucial assessments in many courses, in which they are expected to deliver ideas through oral presentations using the English language.

Unfortunately, due to their level of anxiety to this ‘most provoking situation’, they cannot deliver good oral presentations using the target language. The feeling of anxiety will then later add up to other related symptoms of reticence, hesitations and bad performances. It is believed that anxiety problems and the related factors are the key factors that hinder the students’ good performance in oral communication. Even, there are quite a number of research studies done regarding

this issue especially among the ESL learners in Asian countries, it still remains a concern for most educators especially language teachers as they are still searching for the best steps to attend this issue.

1.2 Background of Study

Engineering students are not excluded in oral assessment. In every engineering course, there will be a number of oral assessments identified in the subjects course outlines. Oral presentations of engineering students can be into various forms such as project-work presentations, oral tests, individual or group presentations. Like any other students, Engineering students also face similar kinds of anxiety during the assessments.

There are of course some factors that underpin their anxiety. Therefore, this study was conducted to find out the anxiety-related problems and other factors which affect the performance of the ESL Engineering students' in one of the Malaysian contexts. Early researches highlighted the issue within USA Context, Canada and not much done over Asian contexts. Although similar kind of researches have been done among researchers from newly- developed engineering universities, it is hoped that this study can add new information to what others have found in relation to this issue. In addition to that, recent research looked at anxiety according to the perspectives of students. As this study had also looked at both engineering students and lecturers' views, it is hoped to fill in the gap of the current researches.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

With the increasing number of oral assessments using English language in tertiary level, it is necessary to find out why most ESL learners cannot deliver good oral presentations whenever they are done in English. Not only oral presentation in English is important in other subjects and courses, it is really important in technical presentation especially for those in engineering field. Bhattacharyya (2011) has highlighted that communicative competence is one of the requirements in technical oral presentation in engineering education. It has been identified that in Malaysia, graduates are lacking communicative competence in workplace. Based on Tan and Tay's (2008) study, it is common to see Malaysian engineers unsuccessfully prepare good technical presentations although they have a wide knowledge of the technical content. There are obviously other factors that possibly trigger anxiety to be occurred especially before, while and after the presentations. Most probably, the educators especially the engineering lecturers are not aware of the causes of these feelings and put little attention to this issue, subsequently blaming the students for not meeting their expectation.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

As there are many factors related to the performance of the oral presentations, it is important to figure out what are some of the factors that really affect the oral presentation performances. This study aims to investigate the occurrence of anxiety-related problems among the ESL learners in oral presentations as this is believed to be the key factor that may determine the learners' performance in oral

presentations. The study is conducted to help the learners themselves to find out the effects that anxiety has on their own performance and for educators, the study aims to help educators to find solution in guiding students to deliver better oral presentations in the future.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- 1.5.1 investigate the occurrence of anxiety- related problems when ESL learners make oral presentations in engineering classes:
 - (a) factors that enhance this problem.
 - (b) symptoms that are shown.

- 1.5.2 find out the perception of engineering lecturers of anxiety-related problems in oral presentations.

1.6 Research Questions

The study examines the following questions:

1.6.1 What triggers anxiety-related problems when ESL Learners make oral presentations in Engineering classes?

- (a) What are the factors that enhance this problem?
- (b) What are the symptoms shown?

1.6.2 What is the perception of Engineering lecturers of anxiety-related problems in oral presentations?

1.7 Significance of the Study

ESL learners nowadays are expected to perform oral presentations regardless of the subjects and courses they take, therefore the study may serve as a guide for the educator especially lecturers to develop appropriate interventions to reduce the anxiety level when delivering oral presentations. By understanding the problems, they may give more guidelines for the students to give better presentations. This is because ESL engineering students are expected not only to be good at delivering

oral presentations regardless the subjects and courses they take, but ability to deliver good presentations is vital for their future career. In fact, this study will provide ideas for the educators to review the courses and subjects especially on the assessment of oral presentations. Engineering lecturers are more aware to take responsibility to guide the students. For students themselves, the study will help to identify which factors lead to their anxiety, therefore they are able to find out the causes and effects of their own anxiety-related problems in oral presentations for their self improvement.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The research was done to a few groups of engineering students in UTHM Johor. The engineering students were selected for this purpose due to their needs of having to do many oral presentations along their journey to complete their courses. As for this research, the second year students were purposely selected because they had already being exposed to some kinds of oral presentations, but not yet mastered the skills similarly as the final year students. The oral presentations were observed in engineering classes done by Engineering students for Engineering lecturers in order to fulfil the requirements of the course, therefore this investigation was not being done over any ESL classes. 125 respondents were picked randomly as the samples. All of them are engineering students from three different faculties. They were from the faculty of Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. The data collection was done between September to October 2013. The quantitative data collection was complete in a duration of three weeks meanwhile the observations and interviews for qualitative data were completed two weeks later.

These respondents' responses gained were somehow answered the general answers on the issue. Their responses could represent the quarter of the population of engineering students in the university.

1.9 Operational Definition of the Key Terms

- **Anxiety:** an uncomfortable feeling in the mind usually caused by fear or expectation that something bad will happen. In this kind of circumstance, it is common to see the ESL learners will experience the unwanted feelings naturally when having to do oral presentations in front of others' presence.
- **Anxiety- related problems:** issues or problems that need attention and thoughts, which is connected in some way to anxiety. Anxiety -related problems in this study will look at potential factors that lead to the occurrence of anxiety among the learners.
- **Symptoms of anxiety:** indicators which show learners experiencing some sorts of unwanted signs such as faster heart beat, intense sweating, shivering and other related symptoms that may affect their oral performance.
- **Oral presentation:** a form of assessment involving explanation or showing knowledge on particular subjects or topics to the audience. It is normally graded by the evaluators based on the quality of the information and methods used when presenting it.

- **English as a Second Language (ESL) Learners:** those who are learning English while living in a community where English is spoken as a Second Language. In this study the respondents are considered as ESL Learners.

- **Engineering Students:** a group of students who are studying in the engineering field. These students will undergo several oral assessments in completion of their courses.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

An oral presentation is commonly used in L2 classes and acts as an assessment tool in many courses or subjects especially at tertiary level. At tertiary level, oral presentation gives students an opportunity to present a summary of their findings on their research areas. Lecturers may assign oral presentations to let the students to engage with a topic and learn to reduce their findings to fit within the time constraints and thus most of the students found this assessment as quite challenging. Neomy and Tuan (2007) have highlighted that these tasks are the most challenging task for language learners unlike any other skills like writing because presentations demand a spontaneous brain language processing. Performance is the key factor that shows whether the presentations are successful or a failure. Even though planning time is given to students before hand, occurrence of anxiety will lead students to perform badly. As oral presentations normally should be done in English, it becomes more demanding task for most ESL learners. Riasati (2011) highlighted that more than half

of ESL or EFL learners' experience some degree of anxiety which leads to negative impact on their performance.

For engineering students, oral presentations cover various forms which needed to be assessed. These may include individual or group project presentations and oral tests. Most of the tasks are basically related to their field. The students need to undergo several presentations related to their projects and most of them are technical based presentations. As to meet the requirement of the university, most of the presentations are evaluated and graded.

2.2 Definitions of Anxiety

Anxiety is one of the most well documented psychological phenomenon which involves not only emotion but also physical. According to Longman Dictionary (1987), anxiety refers to an uncomfortable feeling in the mind usually caused by fear or expectation that something bad will happen. It is also known as a multisystem response to a perceived threat or danger. It reflects a combination of biochemical changes in the body. When anxiety occurs, other symptoms related to it will occur and these symptoms experienced normally by human. However, the characteristics shown by different individuals may vary depending on situations. The types of anxiety that occur can be divided into two main categories-trait anxiety and situational anxiety. Trait anxiety refers to a tendency of a person who has symptoms of anxiety in a variety of situations and it is permanent, meanwhile situational anxiety only arises in certain situation and not permanent. Anxiety that occurs and experienced by the ESL learners is known as situational because it happens only at certain duration of time and at the state of that events happen. In this case, in most

provoking situation like when giving any types of oral presentations, anxiety problems will occur.

McIntyre (1988) had identified five major effects of anxiety on ESL learning and performance. According to him, anxiety will give effect on academic performance, language acquisition, social, communicative competence quality and personal experience.

In oral presentations, therefore, anxiety affects the quality of communicative output, social and experience of ESL Learners when delivering the speech.

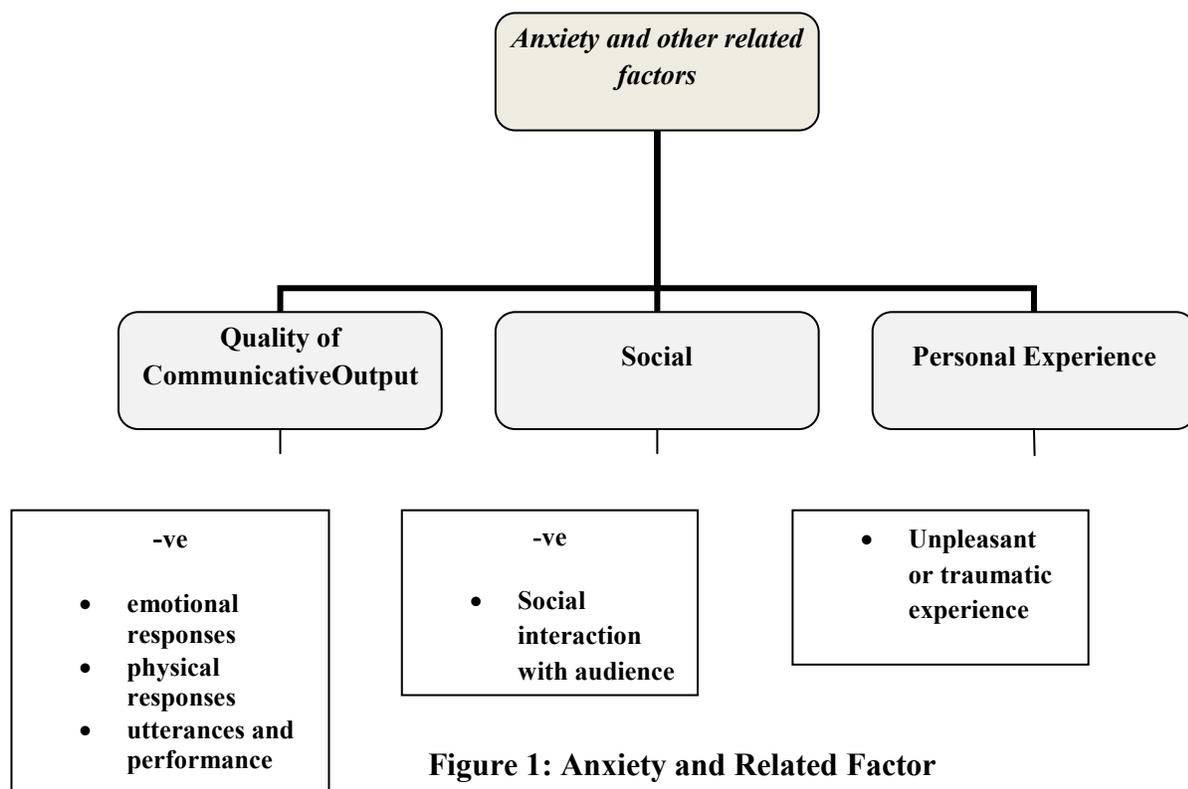


Figure 1: Anxiety and Related Factor

Based on the diagram shown above, anxiety and its related factors may cause the quality of students' performance in oral presentation where it affects the emotional and physical attributes of a speaker. It then will affect the language utterances made by them during the and later lead to unsuccessful performance. Due

to this failure, they will definitely feel awkward with the audience and this affects their social interaction with them, therefore this will affect their moods and consider the oral presentations as a traumatic or unpleasant experience.

2.2.1 Symptoms of Anxiety

There are many examples of occurrence of anxiety when ESL learners deliver oral presentations. Andrade and Williams (2009) suggested that physical symptoms shown by the ESL learners who are anxious include rapid heartbeat, muscle tension, dry mouth and excessive perspiration. Physiological symptoms also occur like feelings of embarrassment, feelings of helplessness, fear, going blank and poor memory recall. Sentences may be jumbled up in the head of the performers. Also, symptoms of anxiety can be seen through avoidance made by the performance such as avoiding the eye contact with the audience. The worst symptom of anxiety happens when there is no ‘show’ of the performers during the presentations.

Due to these symptoms, some case studies have shown that these symptoms affect their willingness to communicate. In addition, according to him, Yamashiro and Mc Laughlin’s (2001) study over Japanese College students had revealed that higher levels of anxiety tend to indicate the lower level of students’ proficiency. Similarly to Hashimoto’s (2002) study over 56 Japanese students at USA University discovered that anxiety exerted a strong influence on perceived communication and students’ willingness to speak.

These indications obviously have shown the clear relationship between anxiety and communicative performance of ESL learners.

2.3 Anxiety in ESL Learning and Teaching

There are many case studies done by researchers on this anxiety problem among ESL learners. The most common anxiety occurrence which was mostly investigated was on the communicative activities. As cited from Tong (2011), Lai (1994) mentioned in his findings that feelings of lack of confidence in using English as a mean of communication in the classroom is common among the ESL learners. They, in this sense tend to avoid any means of communication and this mostly related to their own confidence. Worde (1998) added that anxiety was mainly found in speaking activities. Liu (2006) who conducted a study on anxiety among Chinese Undergrads found that most numbers of students felt anxious when doing activities involving speaking. He also highlighted Marwan's (2007) findings that ESL learners experience many types of anxiety in any activities involving communication.

2.4 Possible Anxiety Related Problems

It is common to hear that there is a relationship between anxiety, self esteem and self confidence. Learners who are anxious when performing in front of others may seem to be considered as someone who has a low self-esteem and lack of confidence. However, there are also some learners who have high self esteem and confidence but getting anxious when performing in front of others. Some perceive that negative classroom environment during the performance may possibly affect their performance. For examples, noise may interrupt their concentration and also negative responses from the audience may also lead to their anxiety.

Some learners found that evaluation or assessment will actually create anxiety. Most learners are afraid to perform if grades are given compared to just a 'practice performance'. The feelings of negative evaluation made by peers or lecturers may actually increase their level of anxiety. When performances are evaluated either by lecturers or colleagues, most of students will be more anxious compared to the non-assessed performances.

Another possible factor is the language that the learners need to use during the oral presentation. By using the language that they do not really use frequently, in this case, the English language, learners become more anxious because they believe themselves to have limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, thus making them more nervous to deliver their speech. Fear of making mistakes is one of the related factors that leads them to have anxiety.

Other possible factors include lack of preparation and last- minutes preparation. When students feel that they have not been given an ample time to prepare, they will not manage to perform best. They may not be able to prepare the best materials and practise the skills of presenting. As they are not fully prepared, this may increase their level of anxiety during the presentation. Some students are also seen not to have a clearer picture of their subject contents and this makes them unsure on what to deliver during the presentations.

2.5 Previous Studies on Anxiety and Oral performance.

Previous studies done for the issue discussed have clearly shown that anxiety occurs in most communicative activities including group discussions and oral presentation. An interesting issue related to this shows that most learners are anxious if their oral presentations, speaking activity and discussions are evaluated. Sewell and Kim (2011) who had done a research over 47 university students in Korea found out the level of anxiety was really high when they were assessed . Another interesting finding based on the research was to see that the respondents were more anxious when doing the oral presentations, speaking test individually compared to having them in groups. The research was somehow supported by other research done by Mustapha and Alias (2010) who suggested that the level of communication apprehension (CA) was high when students participated in public speaking and students with high CA are commonly afraid when conversing in English especially in front of others. In comparison, most learners who have low CA enjoyed any forms of speaking activities using the target language.

A study over 132 Korean college students enrolled in English conversation classes by Park and Lee (2004) had revealed a significant effect between self confidence on L2 oral performance. The higher level of anxiety the students had on speaking English, the lower scores they gained on their oral performance. This showed a very clear correlation between anxiety and performance.

Woodrow (2008) discussed on how second language anxiety had a devastating effect on oral performance among speakers of English. It described a research project about types of speaking activities, relationship between anxiety and second language performance and also the factors and causes of second language anxiety. This research was done to EAP (English of Academic Purpose) learners in an Australian

university, where majority of the students are from the Asian countries. The results shown by the quantitative data had revealed that the students who were involved rated oral presentations as the highest; meanwhile IELTS oral assessment had revealed that anxiety affected oral communication. From the interview, the researcher revealed that those participants thought that giving oral presentation was one of the stressful situations which led to their anxiety. The findings also suggested some related factors contributing to anxiety which hindered oral performances. As anxiety has a significant impact towards oral performance, the writer has suggested that the educators should be more sensitive in providing help for students in order to minimize the anxiety among the L2 learners.

Salim (2012) even highlighted that through her studies over form four students from a sub-urban school in Johor, there was a relationship between learners' anxiety, particularly among high proficiency students with the School Based Oral Assessments (SBOA) score. This shows that anxiety occurs not only among low proficient students but also the good ones.

2.6 Previous Studies on Anxiety and Oral performance in Engineering Field

As mentioned previously, engineering students are also experiencing similar kind of experiences regarding their oral presentation. Although there were not many studies done in this field, studies on engineering students have started to be mushrooming since the year 2000 onwards. These are due to the concerns of the researchers, including the 'engineering community' of highlighting the issue among this target group.

The two studies done over technical students doing oral presentations which were discussed by Devi and Feroz (2008), Bhattacharya and Sargunan (2009) were actually interesting to look at. Devi and Feroz (2008) had done a research over 32 special semester Undergraduates of Electrical engineering faculty in University Technology, Melaka (UTEM), Malaysia and it has revealed that comprehension apprehension (CA) does exist among the students but at a moderate level. According to the lecturers' evaluation, depending on the level of CA that the students have, it somehow affects their oral presentations' performance.

Bhattacharya and Sargunan's (2009) argument on their study seemed to agree with this previous study. Their research done to 240 students of final year engineering students from different faculties in University TinggiPetronas, (UTP) has also revealed that anxiety does occur even among the final year students due to the confidence level and limited skills they have in oral presentations. Their respondents' own perceptions were somehow admitted by the 'community' related to them such as the lecturers, examiners or even the stakeholders. Anxiety related problems such as language skills, methodology on presentation techniques and non verbal attributes are somehow perceived as important dimension to be looked at to reduce the occurrence of anxiety and its symptoms.

The research done by Radzuan and Kaur (2010) examined the oral communication apprehension in English language usage in an Engineering course. 193 Final Year Chemical Engineering students at Universiti Malaysia Pahang, (UniMAP) were selected as the respondents. A set of questionnaires comprising PRCA-24 by McCroskey (1984) was distributed to these respondents. The authors, at the beginning commented on the requirements needed by engineers' community around the world. Many case studies related to this were brought into their discussion. Engineer graduates based on their understandings and cross references prove that they need to possess good communication skills and high confidence level in order to

compete in their 'working world'. Engineers are expected to give clear oral instructions to make effective oral presentations despite their knowledge of subject matters. Across the world and in Malaysian contexts, such justification is proven by the authors with support of concrete data taken from different scholars. Lack of proficiency contributes a lot into anxiety and apprehension. 193 sets of questionnaires and using McCroskey's (1982) 24 statement of personal report on communication apprehension (PRCA), participants' feelings for communication in four different contexts, such as discussions, meetings, interpersonal communication and public speaking were recorded. The findings have shown that public speaking sub-score data reveal communication apprehension higher than meeting and group discussions. As for presentation skills, they perceived their performance as poor. The authors suggested that educators should be aware of skills needed by engineering graduates. Research on communication types at the workplace is also crucial. Thus, it is the responsibilities of the educators to give awareness to students on how employers seek for higher competence graduates. In order to reduce communication apprehension among the students, various forms of oral presentations and the skill required should be emphasized because giving as much opportunities for students at this stage is essential.

The engineering fields in other contexts across the world are also highlighting similar issue. The research done by Sageev and Romanoswki (2001) have reviewed the effectiveness of a program known as Technical Com (TC). The programme was set up in 1987 for University at Buffalo (UB) school of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) due to the feedback from their engineering professors' on the students' low abilities in writing and presentations' performances. A survey conducted over 22 semesters revealed that oral presentation among the students was very low (scale 2.4 out of 5). This creates worries among the engineering educators as communication plays a crucial role at the workplace. The survey has revealed clear feedback from the respondents where most of them agreed that TC instructions should be integral parts of engineering curriculum. TC skills helped them to adapt

with their work requirement. Recommendations to other engineering education community have been made where the authors have highlighted that TC program should be mandatory to all engineering education community and it should start earlier. The TC modules should be integrated to engineering courses and mentoring program for students with real engineers' community is essential for students to get better feedback that could help them be professional engineers in the future.

Albert. and Ramakrishna's (2008) concerns on the Engineering Students' lack of communication skills in India has brought their attention to this issue. They propose that there should be some ways to help reducing students' communication apprehension (CA). In Indian context, only those with good communication skills will be accepted to tertiary level of education. However, only 10 out of 300 universities received a good recruitment record due to students' lack of communication skills. The authors then highlight that engineering students can only be successful in getting jobs just because of their communication skills. There are only 25% of graduates who are suitable for employment and this worries the educators. A course purposely designed for university placement, namely as Communication Skills Laboratory is hoped to help students to have better communication skills and yet help to increase the recruitment of candidates to tertiary level of education. The findings reveal a number of important data including factors contributing to communication apprehension which include lack of practice and proficiency in the target language. The speaking tests done to respondents revealed that public speaking as the top skills needed and more training in oral presentations should be developed.

2.7 Conclusion

There is a clear justification that the occurrence of anxiety does happen to most ESL Learners, no matter in which field they are in and which levels of proficiency they have. As the target ESL learners are the engineering students, the previous studies done are described in details in order to show the relevance of this issue to this group. The anxiety related problems as mentioned above strengthen the fact that most learners consider this issue important to be discussed as the level of communication skills among them are gradually decreasing, and thus worrying the target community group as a whole. For the engineering students themselves, they need to be aware of this situation and get more guidance in order to perform oral presentations better in the future.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section will discuss the methodology of the research. The main purpose of the research was to investigate the anxiety-related problems, factors that enhance the problems and also the symptoms shown by the students in doing oral presentations. The perception from different engineering lecturers was taken in to account when discussing the issue. The ESL learners chosen were the engineering students who are currently studying at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Johor (UTHM). They were selected randomly from three engineering courses. The data for the research were collected through questionnaire, observation and interviews.

3.2 Research Context

The study was done using both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Creswell (2012) a research done using both methods are powerful in terms of validity of the findings. Therefore, this study incorporated the two methods in order to get a better understanding of the research problem. The quantitative data had produced the results to see the trends. On the other hand, the qualitative data such as the observation also gave a clearer picture of the real actions pertaining the issue of the research. In addition, the interview done had provided some actual words of the respondents, thus giving a clearer picture of the phenomenon on the issue discussed.

3.3 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were the ESL Engineering students in UTHM who need to make oral presentations as part of the assessment requirement in the courses they take. There are three main engineering faculties in UTHM and therefore the participants were randomly picked from these three faculties. The study had investigated the occurrence of this problem among the second year degree students as they have undergone several oral assessments throughout their courses. There is currently an estimation of 1500 second year engineering students in UTHM. In each faculty, it is estimated that there are about 500 students. 150 participants regardless gender were approached as the sample, which equivalent to 10% of the population. However, only 125 responded well to this research. Some questionnaires with some missing responses were eliminated. Out of this number, 15 respondents were approached for observations and interviews.

There were 66 male students and 59 female students who participated in this study. These all 125 students are students from three different faculties –Mechanical, Civil and Electrical Engineering. Out of these 125 students, the highest number of participants came from the mechanical engineering faculty, followed by 32 students of civil engineering and the remaining are from the Electrical Engineering faculty.

Another group of participants was five engineering lecturers of UTHM. Three of them are from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and another two are from the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. They were the one who assessed oral presentation done by their students in class during the actual observation.

3.4 Research Instrument

There were three research instruments used in this study. The instruments were questionnaire, observation and interview. The quantitative data came from the questionnaire and the qualitative data came from the other two instruments, namely through observation and interviews. A total of 150 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the participants from different engineering faculties in UTHM. Out of these participants, 15 were approached for observation in order to provide a clearer picture of anxiety occurrences. More in-depths information about the topic was collected through the interview sessions. In addition, five engineering lecturers were approached in this semi structured interviews to share their perception on this issue.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this project was adapted partially from the previous study done by Matsumoto's (1988). It comprised a list of emotional and physical responses of participants in oral presentations. Some of the questions were modified to suit the engineering students chosen. Different question-types, such as multiple choice questions, scales, yes-no, listing questions were used in the questionnaire. More questions were added based on the suitability of the research questions designed purposely for this research.

There were 21 questions to be completed by the respondents. The first two questions focused on personal details of the respondents which cover the gender and the course that the students enroll. The next questions – Q4, Q5 and Q6 asked respondents about the frequency of them having oral presentations individually or in groups and also the level of anxiety they experience in both types of oral presentations. Questions 8 to 13 basically asked respondents to reflect their anxiety experiences during oral presentations. A list of reactions that often occur in oral presentation were given to respondents through question 14 to 17. The next question, Q18 asked respondent to reveal the most factor that causes their anxiety and the remaining 3 questions, Q 19 to 21 were designed to explore the educators' roles in helping the respondents in oral presentations. Certain questions such as Q6, Q10, Q12 and Q13 were the best indicators to determine samples to be observed and interviewed. These particular questions were the one showed those who experienced the greatest level of anxiety, were then chosen for interviews and observation. (*refer to Appendix A for the questionnaire used in this study*)

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